

Application No. 10/753,423

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July 20, 2005

**IN THE CLAIMS**

Please amend the claims as follows:

Cancel claims 1-4.

5. (original) A method of assembling a guard rail, comprising the steps of:

- a. pre-drilling a top retainer and a bottom rail for attachment to a plurality of hollow balusters, the top retainer having an exterior surface having a pair of opposed channels and each baluster comprising a plurality of inner webs affixed to a wall of the baluster and to a bore for a fastener disposed within the baluster wall,
- b. disposing fasteners through the holes into the bores to affix the balusters between the top retainer and bottom rail,
- c. sliding a hand rail having an internal surface having a pair of projections complementary to the channels over the upper retainer to engage the projections in the channels, and
- d. affixing the top retainer and the bottom rail to posts.

6. (original) The method of claim 5 wherein the hand rail comprises a bearing plate supported by an upper surface of the upper retainer.

7. (original) The method of claim 5 including, before step a., the step of extruding the top retainer, bottom rail, balusters and hand rail.

8. (original) The method of claim 7 wherein each post is hollow and including the steps of anchoring a structural member and disposing the post over a structural member.

Cancel claims 9-11.